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# Profiles of 21 Dropout Prevention Programs in Alberta Schools

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# INTRODUCTION

This draft version of *Profiles of Dropout Prevention Programs in Alberta Schools* grew out of the applications for START grants submitted to Alberta Education and Canada Employment and Immigration in December 1990. Many applications referred to dropout prevention programs already under way. Given the interest many school staff have expressed to us in learning about dropout prevention programs that have already started in Alberta, we wanted to compile this information and send it out as soon as possible. Marc Leduc, a Research Assistant with Alberta Education, has followed up the leads from the proposals and other referrals he received in the process and compiled the Profiles included here.

These Profiles all describe school or jurisdiction level initiatives. Any resources required for these programs have been provided at the local level. We have not included any examples of Alberta Education's funded programs that have a dropout prevention component (High Needs, Native Education, Co-op Education, Integrated Occupational Program).

We know we have missed examples of dropout prevention programs in Alberta schools simply because of the time limits in developing this draft. If we have missed a program you know of or are directing, please tell us about it on the first tear sheet at the back so we can include it in the next version.

We would like to know if this draft is helpful to you. Will you use it? Is an expanded version warranted? Are there any changes you would recommend for a revision? Please give us your comments on the second tear sheet at the back.

Many thanks to all of you who talked to Marc and provided him with details of your programs and referrals to other programs. We applaud your dropout prevention initiatives.

Stay-in-School Interdivisional
Committee of Alberta Education

# SELF ESTEEM

# SOCIAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

| | |
|---|---|
| Program Title: | Pro-Social Skills |
| Target Group: | K-6 |
| No. of Students: | Entire student population |
| Years in Place: | 1 |


| | |
|---|---|
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### Description

After surveying parents, students, staff, and alumni (now jr. high students), the administration found that students lacked self-confidence. They decided to teach every student a social skill every two weeks as part of the health curriculum. Examples of these social skills include what to do when: someone pushes into line; someone is a bully; someone teases you; peers are doing something you do not want to do; how to ask a question in class; and how to ask a teacher for help. The aim is to teach the students that every decision offers a number of choices, some of which are better than others.

Ms. Penner decided to name the program after Forest Green's motto, "Caring, Sharing, and Time", since it compliment the school's philosophy and goals very well.

Each skill is broken down into steps, allowing the teacher and students to discuss each aspect of the skill. A relevant situation is described, possible courses of action are discussed, and the children relate any personal experiences relevant to the skill in question. Eventually the situation is role modelled by the children. The teacher will always play the role of any actor who displays inappropriate behaviour, such as punching someone.

The teaching of social skills is run in conjunction with the counsellor and a peer support program. Whenever inappropriate behaviour choices (e.g. major verbal or physical abuse, or defiance of authority) are made, the student will be referred to the counsellor. If poor behavioural choices are made again, the student becomes involved with the peer support group. Parents become involved if the behaviour persists.

### Participants

The program is teacher run and taught to all students from kindergarten to grade six. Parents are not involved in any formal role. The parent advisory committee did participate at the start by providing input into the direction the program should take.

### Cautions

Ms. Penner mentioned that the resources in *Skills Streaming for the Elementary Child* are not necessarily suitable one's students. Each lesson must be appropriate for the children's abilities in one's school. For example, staff developed new materials for children in kindergarten and grade one because they felt the language used in the book was too difficult.

As with any program, staff commitment to the program is important. Finally, The role of parent volunteers should not be overlooked. Training them with these same skills ensures they will reinforce the appropriate behaviour and use the language the students have been taught in class.

### Evaluation

Evaluation data have recently been collected. This year's parent survey demonstrated clear support by parents and students for the program: 80% said they agreed or strongly agreed that the program should continue. Staff have also

indicated they want the program to continue.

One observation that has been noted is that those children who have recently transferred into Forest Green are easy to detect. Often they do not seem to know how to react to students who have learned to respond to their taunts differently. The students who have gone through the program seem to be more aware of others (social responsibility). Finally, students frequently deemed to be at risk socially or emotionally seem to be getting skills which they have been lacking for a variety of reasons.

## SKILLS FOR SUCCESS

Fort McMurray Public School District offers similar program to 20 students between the ages and 13. The program aims to meet the needs of students exhibiting significant anxiety, frustration, stress, or social adaptation problems related to school progress, but which do not stem from identified learning disabilities.

Half a day each week is spent on activities which try to raise the self-esteem and improve the independent learning skills of these students. Activities are carried out in small groups of six students. Areas of skills training include: self-esteem; impulse control; social interaction skills; anger management; responsibility; and cooperation, leadership, and team efforts.

The program involves a great deal of community involvement so that students are learning necessary social and job related skills which are required in a community/business setting. The intent is to prevent these students from requiring a special program later, such as the Transitional Class (see p. 15).

The teacher for this program is on a half-time contract and has counselling expertise. A special education teacher is available to offer support and ideas when required.

Finally, the teacher communicates to parents and the home schools through a monthly newsletter which outlines the skills to be taught that month. It is hoped the parents and teachers will use this information to help the students transfer skills they have learned in the program to their home and school setting.

As this is the first year of the program, no evaluation has been completed yet.

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## RESOURCES

**Forest Green Elementary**

- *Skills Streaming for the Elementary Child*, covers material for K-6.
- Materials and scenarios developed by staff for children in kindergarten and grade one.

**Fort McMurray Public School District #2833**

- *Skills for Success*.
- *Skills Streaming for the Elementary Child*.
- *Skills Streaming for the Adolescent*.
- *Spelt*, a guide on memory, organizational, and study strategies.
- *Coping for Kids*, an audio kit for grades 4-6 which offers music, sounds, and strategies for relaxing and coping with stress.
- Transportation to and from the program's location and the home school by taxi.

# MENTORING

| | |
|---|---|
| Program Title: | Support-a-Student |
| Target Group: | Potential Dropouts |
| No. of Students: | 22 |
| Years in Place: | 1 |


| | |
|---|---|
| Contact: | Ken Huber<br>Assistant Principal |
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**Description**

Teachers, administrators, and the counsellor noticed a number of students who were at risk of dropping out but felt little could be done to address their needs. After some thought, staff were asked to volunteer as mentors. In all 22 volunteered, including administrators, teachers, and one member of the support staff. A list of students at risk of dropping out was compiled by staff. The list was prioritized by a steering committee and 22 students were selected. Criteria used included attendance patterns, how the student applied oneself in class (including an inability to concentrate or a propensity to disrupt), and any other factors interfering with the ability to perform in school.

The original intention was to have mentors meet at least 15 minutes once a week with their student. Most mentors have been generous with their time: some have gone to movies on the weekend with their student, and others have shared their personal hobbies. Since most mentors volunteered for the role, there was a tendency to give over and above what was required.

Students will have the same mentors next year. Contact during the summer will depend upon each party's wishes. Once a student does better academically, the "contract" is terminated and a new student enters the program.

Implementation involved a steering committee meeting for two hours to develop the program and another few hours to select the students. Time is required to distribute students' timetables to respective mentors. Permission slips are given to mentors which allow them to remove their student from a class during their spare. This has not posed any problems regarding class disruptions.

Inservicing mentors on how to interact one-on-one with students is undertaken. Adults comfortable working with groups may have difficulty with this more intimate type of interaction. Strategies on building trust between mentor and student are discussed. For example, one method which builds trust while eliciting information from the student is to tell the student what the mentor is most afraid of. Trust thereby becomes mutual. The aim of these strategies is to establish meaningful interaction and learn about those problems affecting the student's performance.

Finally, the mentor and student must discuss what the relationship between them will be to avoid confusion and unwarranted expectations.

A luncheon has been held twice, with a third likely in June, to support and reward the mentors for their efforts. These luncheons also provide mentors an opportunity to compare their experiences: how the relationship has grown over time; why a mentor cannot seem to make any progress with a student; etc. This interaction between mentors plays a significant role in emotionally supporting mentors.

With regards to discipline, mentors are asked not to become involved. They may advise the student of their options but are not to be involved. For example, the principal's student spent the first two weeks thinking he could do almost anything by using his mentor's authority as a threat against teachers. This problem was resolved once the student realized the principal would not intervene.

Both students and teachers were asked whether they had any preferences regarding who they were paired with. Most did not.

### Participants

Any adult working in the school is eligible to be a mentor. Currently, the community has not been asked to participate. This may change next year as Bowness High School is considering getting involved in a business partnership and administrators may ask employees to volunteer as mentors.

To date parents are not involved in the program to any extent. Parent feedback has been very positive and they have noticed attitude change in their children.

### Cautions

It is essential that mentors volunteer to participate if a mentoring program is to work. Mentors must sincerely want to learn about their student's life and be willing to share one's own. This raises the problem of building genuine relationships over relatively short periods of time. New mentors can have difficulty relating to students on such an intimate level. Hence, it is important to have support and reinforcement available to mentors. Regular luncheons provide mentors an opportunity to relate experiences and offer advice and support to each other. Also, a meeting held before the start of the year is useful to orient the roles of mentors to teachers who are not able to mentor, as they must also understand the role of the mentors and be willing to work with them.

Mr. Huber also noted that occasionally it is *not* advantageous to keep students in school at any cost. Schools try what they can but a small minority of students may have to leave before they can come back and finish (see below).

Finally, the ethnic background of a child can be important in the type of mentor the student is paired with.

### Evaluations

Having begun in September 1991, the program does not have any concrete results to date. Thus far 21 of the 22 students have stayed in school. The one student to drop had numerous interviews with his mentor and the mentor recommended that he drop. His parents, however, wanted their son to continue meeting with the teacher. These meetings have continued and the student intends to return next September, now that certain personal problems have been dealt with.

## PLUS PROJECT

The Plus Project couples special tutoring sessions with a mentorship program to meet the needs of its students (see program's description on page 16.) Once students are invited into the program they are paired with a mentor to provide them with a one-on-one relationship.

Mentors are expected to meet with their students at least once a week for 15 minutes. The meetings focus primarily on academic progress. Occasionally, personal problems will be discussed but this is avoided for two reasons. First, the mentor ends up becoming a counsellor to the student and may thereby become involved in areas in which they are unqualified. Second, the personal problem(s) can easily dominate the agenda of the weekly meetings, leaving the discussion of academics incomplete.

The administration leaves it up to the teacher to decide whether they want to mentor a student they are teaching. Some feel that the mentorship role offers them a chance to build upon the existing teacher-student relationship and choose a current student. Others choose not to mentor a current student to ensure that the mentor-student relationship remains neutral.

Ideally, each mentor would be assigned one student. In order to provide this resource, the mentorship challenge is offered to certificated as well as non-certificated school staff. The team is expanded to include other adults who are involved in the school system. In the past, this has involved trustees, central office administrators, teachers and administrators from other schools, and support staff from central office and other schools.

Currently, eighteen staff from Stony Plain Junior High have volunteered, as have four adults from the district level. These mentors are paired with two to three students during the year. No consideration has been given to expanding the volunteer role to include parents and community members. One concern raised by Mr. Garneau focused on the confidentiality of the students' academic and personal background: adults not employed by the school system may not be as accountable. Also, parents may not appreciate their children discussing personal problems with other parents.

Mr. Garneau warns that mentors must volunteer to mentor, as the role can be very demanding, eating up considerable time. Administrators also warn their mentors not to structure their relationship too much as the students want someone to talk to, not someone to be subservient to. Additionally, parents should be kept informed of developments throughout the year through either committee-initiated releases or direct mentor-parent contact.

The issue of confidentiality, particularly among non-certificated mentors, must be addressed at the outset. Information garnered from the student by the mentor must be shared only with those who can use it to improve their service to students (e.g. counsellors, administrators, teachers). If information is received that may be of value to future committee members/mentors, it can be added to the Profile on a form provided to mentors for this purpose.

It is important that the Project Committee meet with the mentors on a regular basis (4 week intervals are recommended) as a group or, if impossible, individually. The purpose is to ensure that the mentorship is progressing satisfactorily and to give support to mentors, particularly those who are non-certificated and who may have had little experience with students in a direct way.

As the mentorship program evolves, there should be opportunities for mentors and students to "switch partners" if the pairing of mentor/student proves to be uncomfortable to either party.

## RESOURCES

**Bowness High School**

- Resources and magazines for mentors on strategies on communicating with adolescents.
- Luncheons and awards for the mentors and their efforts over the year.

**Stony Plain Junior High School**

- Administrators must allow mentors time to meet with students at the school.
- Certificates of appreciation and a debriefing/social function to culminate to the project year.
- Facilities for private meetings between mentors and students.

**Forest Lawn High School**

- Time by administrators to promote the program and involve new staff.

A role description/guidelines for mentors has been prepared and is available upon request.

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## ADOPT - A - STUDENT

This mentoring program is similar to the one in Bowness. Counsellors in the junior high feeder schools forward the names of students at risk of dropping out to the Forest Lawn counsellor. Criteria used to identify students include failing one or more grades, poor attendance, suspensions, and student talk of dropping out. The program gives students an adult to contact in the school. Mentoring occurs for a semester at which point the counsellor meets with the student and determines if s/he wants to stay in the program. Most do stay.

Any adult in the school is free to become a mentor. Parents and other community members are not involved in the program. Unlike Bowness High School, the school does not intend to offer mentorships to adults in the community, primarily because of the extra demand involved in coordination.

It was suggested that the person responsible for the mentorship program be visible in the school. Such visibility is important in promoting the program within the school. The person must also be willing to go out and involve new staff in the program.

It was found that the more involved the mentors are, the more successful the program is. Involvement includes a genuine caring for the students, though mentors are not expected to dig too deep regarding personal problems, unless the student volunteers the information

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# PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

# PARENT INSERVICE

| | |
|---|---|
| Program Title: | Parent Inservice |
| Target Group: | Parents of Young Children |
| Years inPlace: | 2 |
| Contact: | Barabara McPherson |
| Location: | Vice-Principal<br>ValleyView School<br>4105 26 Ave S.E.<br>Calgary, AB<br>T2B 0C6<br>248-3334 |
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**Description**

Two programs are in place at Valleyview Elementary. The Pre-ECS program invites parents whose children will be attending ECS the coming fall to a two hour session. This past year parents spent one hour with a speaker discussing various topics of interest to them (e.g. positive parenting, community resources, street proofing, reading to children, and self-esteem for parents and children). Meanwhile their children were with the ECS teacher. The second hour had the teacher, parents, and children doing various activities together (e.g. making plado, cooking pizza, crafts, and walking fieldtrips). The goal is to orient the children, many of whom have not been in a play school environment, and to let parents know how then can work with the school regarding their child's education.

The Pre-School program offers a monthly parenting skills session for parents. These sessions are advertised more widely and are open to parents who do not necessarily have children attending Valleyview. These sessions cover a new topic every month and are for parents interested in good parenting. Responsibility to organize each session is rotated among Valleyview's three administrators. Over the course of the year each will organize three separate sessions. They attempt to hold the sessions on days the ECS teachers are free (time banking) so that they may attend.

Baby-sitting services are available during these monthly sessions. Baby-sitting is provided by volunteer students from the neighbouring junior high school. They are rewarded at the end of the year with a small party.

**Cautions**

Given a clientele which is traditionally labelled as high-needs, it is essential that staff put aside their middle class values and *listen to what parents tell them* they want from the monthly Pre-School sessions. Often a middle class staff can be patronizing to parents by assuming they do not know how to raise children. This assumption often ignores the limited resources economically disadvantaged families must work with.

**Evaluation**

Some of the parents who participate in the annual Pre-ECS program become "good ECS parents" by volunteering for the program and helping out in other ways. Efforts are increasing to attract ethnic parents to these programs.

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# PARENT INSERVICE

In addition to training parents to be paid teaching aides (see p. 19), Alex Munro offers some inservicing to parents. These sessions are open to parents interested in becoming more involved with their child's education by learning more about how their children learn and how the school is endeavouring to teach.

Parents are invited to the school to learn how to read effectively with their child and to learn how to reinforce concepts taught at school through activities other than homework. Parents are shown how to use many techniques that classroom teachers and aides employ in the classroom and are inserviced by the school to help them to adapt some of these same techniques in their homes with their own children.

The program indirectly informs parents as to what the school is doing and why, and allows parents to work more closely with the school to reinforce what the school is attempting to do.

| | |
|---|---|
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# ALTERNATIVE PROGRAMS

# ACHIEVEMENT RECOVERY

| | |
|---|---|
| Program Title: | Transitional Class |
| Target Group: | Grades 7-9, at-risk students capable of regular jr. high curriculum |
| No. of Students: | 18 |
| Years in Place: | Over 10 |


| | |
|---|---|
| Contact: | Leigh Anne Willard |
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| Fax: | 743-2655 |


### Description

Junior high school students who have fallen behind one or two grade levels due to social or emotional factors are placed into the Transitional Class housed at Fort McMurray Composite High School. The emphasis is on the four core academic subjects, with physical education and one or two options available for some variety in programming. The aim is to bring students up to their appropriate grade level so they can be integrated either into grade 10 or back to their home school without difficulty. Without intervention these students, who have not achieved for reasons other than lack of ability, would be at-risk of dropping out.

Students set annual objectives for the upcoming year, e.g. completing a year of curriculum by January 30 and then being integrated into the appropriate grade level. The teacher provides weekly contracts to each student with a number of daily assignments such that the student's annual goal can be met. The daily assignments must be completed by the end of the school day. If not, the student stays after class until they are finished.

The program is designed to quickly and effectively make up one or two grade levels, to increase the students' responsibility for their own success, and to assist students in developing skills necessary to be successful in a regular classroom. It is not a long-term program. Students work hard on their individual program plan in the core subjects, benefit from the increased individual attention, and most are successfully integrated back into the school system after a year.

### Participants

Schools refer the names of students who are not succeeding academically to the district office for placement in the Transitional Class. Academic delays must have occurred for reasons other than a learning disability to be admitted into the program. In other words, the student must have the capability to function in the regular school but is not progressing for other reasons, such as hospitalization, family problems, substance abuse, etc. Other districts may send students to this program but a tuition agreement between boards must be signed.

Parent consent is required to get the student into the program. The program committee outlines expectations and objectives to the parents and students at the intake meeting. Students are asked to make a commitment to their education and parents become indirectly committed by verbally agreeing to certain procedures. For instance, if their child is sent home, the parent must come with the student to the school if the student is to re-enter. This can be very demanding on parents who have not had to pay much attention to the child.

Thus far no parent has taken a position of apathy and waited for the school to act without their involvement. This is in part a result of the emphasis made by Fort McMurray Composite to make parental involvement as comfortable as possible, e.g. no judgements are made regarding their parenting skills. Hence, instead of portraying the policy of parents bringing their children to school after a suspension as a rule they must

follow, the school stresses that it can help the student only with the parents' support.

The program uses a teacher and teacher's aide both working full-time. A phone in the classroom is used to track down students who are absent and to contact parents when necessary.

**Cautions**

As in all drop-out prevention programs, the teacher is crucial to the success of the Transitional Class. Not only must the teacher be flexible and be willing to work with such students, but they cannot be easily shocked by the language and behaviour of students typically placed in this program. Also, it is important that a coordinator be appointed to deal with administrative details, to follow up with social agencies, and to maintain parental contact. These demands cannot be undertaken by the teacher alone.

**Evaluation**

The program has witnessed 75% of its participants go on to achieve a diploma. Other results include increased attendance, improved achievement, attitude change, and greater involvement with other students and in school activities.

## RESOURCES

- Students are provided with city transit passes to cover transportation to Composite High School.
- Individual study carouls.
- A time-out room.
- Telephone in the classroom.

# YOUNG MOTHERS PROGRAMS

| | |
|---|---|
| Program Title: | Young Mothers Centre |
| Target Group: | Ages 13-18 |
| No. of Students: | 12 at any one time; 18 over the course of year. |
| Years in Place: | 7 |
| Contact: | Leigh Anne Willard |
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**Description**

The program offers young mothers six months of schooling from a classroom within the hospital. The program is oriented towards maintaining the regular curriculum with special attention to core subjects. Each student follows an individual program plan during their stay. Junior High students work independently on core subjects using regular course text books to complete assignments. Students in the High School program generally complete courses through the Alberta Correspondence School. In addition, students are exposed to parenting strategies through a five credit Personal Life Skills course. Pre-natal, nutritional, and post-natal care classes are offered by Public Health Unit staff. Staff from Social Services and Legal Aid hold question and answer sessions for students.

Given the critical time these students are experiencing, the district feels that educational and community support can make a positive difference in the lives of both the young mother and their children. Expectations of students in the Young Mothers program are somewhat different than in the regular program, e.g. late penalties are waived for morning sickness.

The program is attempting to set up a network of mothers which would offer young mothers some support. The network would include former young mothers and single mothers who could empathize with and advise students in similar situations.

**Participants**

Students may enter the program at any time of the year. The only prerequisite to attend is a letter by a physician confirming their pregnancy. Students from other districts may attend once a tuition agreement has been signed between the boards. Tuition is charged per day since there is no guarantee students will stay for an allotted period. Students may stay for a total of six months before and/or after birth.

The teacher and a full-time aide run the program. They must coordinate with the each student's subject teachers if curriculum continuity is to be maintained. The two staff also provide counselling to the young mothers and their parents. Parents play no formal role in the program.

**Evaluation**

The program has been successful in allowing students to maintain their schooling for at least a year. Unfortunately, the district does not have any day care facilities despite the fact a growing number of girls are keeping their babies.

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# YOUNG MOTHERS/DAY CARE

Lethbridge is currently implementing a program to meet the needs of its young mothers. It will offer special classes and services for pregnant students and a daycare for young mothers. The program has two key objectives. The first is to both retrieve those mothers who have recently dropped out and have them complete their diploma, and to prevent pregnant students from dropping out. The second is to provide parenting skills to these

students to make them better able to cope with their demanding circumstances. An important benefit of having this program in place is that it will provide work experience to I.O.P. students wishing to work with children.

Unlike Fort McMurray Public, Lethbridge has opted to offer classes in a school (Allan Watson). Consideration had been given to using off-campus space but the expense of renovating the space to meet the fire and safety codes was too expensive.

However, given the highly specialized nature of day care centres with their numerous regulations and guidelines, the district decided to have a private day care operator run the program.

The program plans to serve 10 -12 students beginning next fall.

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Fax: 327-4387

## RESOURCES

**Fort McMurray**

- No special resources required for the hospital's classroom.
- Ordered resources dealing with pregnancy, parenting, birth control, sexually transmitted diseases, and on making decisions.
- District provides transportation to the hospital. Depending upon residence location, the school will provide city bus passes or a school bus.

**Lethbridge**

- Furnishings and equipment necessary for daycare.
- Day care staffing requirments are strict.
- No extra insurance required.

# TUTORIAL

| | |
|---|---|
| Program Title: | Plus Project |
| Target Group: | Grades 7-9 |
| No. of Students: | 53 |
| Years in Place: | 2 |


| | |
|---|---|
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| Fax: | 963-2980, via County Office |


### Description

This program combines special tutoring sessions with a mentorship program to form a relatively comprehensive program. The mentoring program is discussed in more detail in the mentoring section of the booklet.

Students are identified as being at risk by the Project Committee during the first term using academic achievement criteria. The Project committee consists of seven or eight teachers, two administrators, and the counsellor. A one-on-one interview is held with the student in which the student is asked what s/he thinks is the cause of his/her problem, what could be done to improve the situation, and what type of assistance from teachers s/he would like to receive. No action is taken by the administration at this point other than to encourage the student to get help, e.g. individual tutoring. The aim of the interview is to make the student aware that there is a problem and realize what s/he might do to solve it.

The progress of the student is monitored by members of the Project Committee from this initial contact. If the pattern of behaviour continues after the second term then a sub-committee develops a detailed student profile. The profile includes every mark achieved by the student in reading and maths since kindergarten; all marks in each term at junior high; a listing of specific factors felt by the school to be relevant (e.g. the number of schools attended, number of siblings); a survey of parents for anecdotal information on the struggles and successes that the child has experienced throughout his/her educational experience, the child's attitude towards school (in the past and present), parent academic expectations for the child, the his/her homework habits, and the parents' suggestions on contributions each party (child, parents, teachers) can make to improve the child's chances for success. A survey of each student's teachers is also included in the profile documenting the teachers' perception of the student's work habits, peer relationships, receptiveness to teacher assistance, and positive characteristics of the student.

Once the record has been compiled, the student is invited to join the Plus Project with the parents' consent. The student (i) signs a promissory note pledging to attend special help sessions at noon/after school and to actively participate in the Project, (ii) is assigned a mentor, and (iii) is offered special help classes organized by subject and grade level. In addition to these subject specific classes, the program offers classes on organizational skills, study skills, and test writing skills. Since these classes are offered during the noon hour and after school, the school provides participants with a snack. Note that these classes are open to any student in the school who feels s/he may need help. Members of the Plus Project are encouraged to attend but are not compelled to.

Meanwhile, Plus Project participants meet with their mentor at least once a week to discuss their academic progress (set goals and monitor progress).

### Participants

The number of students attending the noon hour and after school sessions varies. One-third of the students involved in the program attend all

sessions. The remaining two-thirds pick and choose which sessions they will attend.

As discussed earlier under "Mentorships", all adults working in the educational system are free to volunteer as mentors. In all, 22 adults mentored this year, including four employees from the district level. In addition, the central office curriculum facilitator presented the sessions on test writing, study, and organizational skills.

Parents do not have any formal role in the program. They do attend the Project's orientation night, provide background information to the steering committee about their children, and are responsible for transporting their children from school after the extra classes are finished in the late afternoon. Parents are notified through newsletters and personal letters about the progress of their child in the program.

**Cautions**

Although the school keeps track of student attendance regarding the special tutorial classes, students are not compelled to attend. The monitoring of attendance is for internal purposes only. Mr. Garneau advises that students cannot be forced to participate in the extra courses. Their motivation to attend must be internal if the classes are to be effective.

Secondly, staff must also be interested in participating in the program. Like the students, they cannot be compelled to mentor or teach the extra classes. Regardless of their active participation in the Project, all teachers are affected by it in that there is an increase in student demand for remedial help.

Ultimately, projects of this type challenge a school staff to evaluate the extent of their commitment to providing students with the opportunity to learn and succeed. At its initial stage, such a project requires a cadre of teachers/staff who are willing and able to carry the project to its fruition since the expectations of students and parents are heightened. As the Project evolved, the number of staff who became actively involved, particularly as mentors, increased as "word" spread of the rewards participation brought. One of these rewards was a reminder to teachers of the complexities of factors in students' lives that contribute to success or failure. The result is increased empathy for students.

Finally, it is recommended that the school feed the students involved in the special sessions. This offers an incentive to attend the sessions and provides a more "nurturing" atmosphere.

**Evaluation**

The program has seen a drop in the number of students who qualify as candidates for grade retention. A follow-up on Project students in subsequent years indicated a significant improvement in overall performance. A more formal post-Project evaluation is planned. A survey of students indicated that they liked the food offered at the sessions, were more willing to ask for help, and appreciated the ongoing contact provided by mentors.

## RESOURCES

- Food to feed the students during the after school special help sessions.
- Transportation by the parents for attending sessions after hours.
- A dedicated team of staff members who are strongly committed to the welfare of students and are willing to extend the range and effort of their education services to students and parents.
- A school culture which promotes the value that all students can and want to learn, given the appropriate circumstances.

# INDIVIDUAL CLASSROOM ASSISTANCE 1

| | |
|---|---|
| Program Title: | Resource Room |
| Target Group: | Grade 7, with some 8 & 9 |
| No. of Students: | 26 |
| Years in Place: | 3 |
| Contact: | R. Messier |
| Location: | Principal<br>St. Clement School<br>7620 Millwoods Road S.<br>Edmonton, AB<br>T6K 2P7<br>463-1916 |

## Description

The Resource Room Program at St. Clement is somewhat different from conventional resource rooms. Typically, these programs pull students out of the regular stream to be taught in a special class by the resource teacher. Much of the time is spent with one-on-one teaching and individual study on those subjects in which the student is behind in grade level.

Administrators at St. Clement found that students who were pulled did not like the loss of peer contact. Consequently, rather than pulling the students out, the resource teacher works in the regular classroom to give the students the needed one-on-one help. This requires the resource teacher to coordinate and work closely with the subject teacher. As with the pull-out programs, the resource teacher's efforts are focused on the core academic courses.

Goals are set by the student and the resource teacher at the first parent-teacher interview. Attendance of parents and students has been excellent to date.

The students in the program are divided into two groups. As the teacher can only be in one place at a time, care must be taken to ensure that both groups are not simultaneously in a core academic class.

The first objective of the program is to make students feel good about themselves. Many of these students have no confidence regarding academic ability.

Students who have atrocious writing and spelling are provided with a small word processor for the year. They may use it in class and at home to complete assignments once a $100 damage deposit has been paid. The students must come in to school before the day begins to print their notes and any assignments. Administrators should be aware that some time has to be spent teaching the students how to use the machine.

## Participants

The program is aimed primarily at students in grade seven who are not achieving academically. Some students will continue in the program in grade eight and fewer still in grade nine. Newly transferred students in any grade level who are having difficulties are also in the program.

Parents must give consent to have their children involved. This is obtained in a meeting held during the spring prior to the student entering the program. Expectations of the child, parent, and the program are discussed. Three to four formal meetings are held each year and a significant amount of informal communication over the telephone is conducted.

## Cautions

It is important for the teacher to provide close contact with the students at the start of the year as the bond between the resource teacher and the student must be built. Much of the time spent at the beginning of the year is spent teaching the students how to organize themselves for school (e.g. study skills, how to use the homework book, etc.). Often the teacher can spend September to November working on such organizational skills.

Once again, time must be spent to find an

appropriate teacher to run such a program. Teachers of the core subjects must be oriented and made aware of the relationship they will have with the resource teacher.

**Evaluation**

Students are told that their class assignments have equal weight on their grades as exams. Being organized and neat also carries a certain weight, as do their attitudes, efforts and degree of cooperation. This marking scheme allows students to be successful regardless of their abilities.

The close contact between the resource teacher and the students does seem to have an impact. Those students which go into the regular program manage to succeed. The program helps them get organized and feel better about themselves. Unfortunately, not all students are reached.

Students who do not succeed in the program have typically had behavioural problems throughout their school years. These students must learn to modify their behaviour, a difficult task in classes of 30 or more students.

## RESOURCES

- Tandy Wordprocessor $220 (debit)
- Printer $350 (debit)

- Damage Deposits $100 (Credit)
- One hour/week to monitor program; more if the teacher is not organized.
- Time to meet with parents prior to and during the program.

# INDIVIDUAL CLASSROOM ASSISTANCE 2

| | |
|---|---|
| ProgramTitle: | Paid Classroom Aides |
| Target Group: | Students who are not progressing as well as they could |
| No. of Students: | 75-100 |
| Years in Place: | 2 |
| Contact: | Hélène McCorquindale |
| Location: | Principal<br>Alex Munro Elementary<br>427 78 Ave N.E.<br>Calgary, AB<br>T2K 0R9<br>275-4300 |

### Description

This program uses parents as paid teaching aides to help students experiencing difficulty grasping concepts and who need the kind of attention provided by individual assistance. The aim is to improve the reading and writing skills of these students and to provide them with learning strategies which they can later use for independent study. Each aide spends 15 minutes working with one to three students 2 to 3 times a week. Aides are available approximately 20 hours during the week.

When the program first started Mrs. McCorquindale had stressed to her teachers that she wanted them to use the parents in the teaching process, not simply to cut and paste with the students. During her rounds, Mrs. McCorquindale found herself frequently advising the aides on teaching strategies which would promote independent learning. An example might include strategies on how to get the children to develop their own vocabulary without the parent aide telling them the meanings. Eventually she decided to give them all a formal inservice on teaching strategies. Benefits included a consistency in teaching skills among the aides, a reduction in the need to advise them on teaching strategies, and an increase in their confidence with the students.

The program had been tried using strictly volunteer parent assistance. Although it worked to a degree, Mrs. McCorquindale found they were unable to obtain consistent and regular commitment. As a result, the program often broke down and teachers and students experienced some frustration and disappointment. Consequently, the program is currently paying the aides a nominal fee of $10/hr. These wages are paid out of the Support Staff Enhancement Fund. The wage helps to regulate the attendance of the aides, allowing staff to better integrate and plan for this new "resource" and increases their commitment to the program.

### Participants

Paid classroom aides are selected from among the parent volunteer body who regularly work in the school. They are invited to become paid aides after Mrs. McCorquindale has had multiple opportunities to informally observe their activities with students. These people demonstrated intelligence, compassion, patience, objectivity, and discretion. The careful observation needed to select aides can make duplicating this program in a shorter organizational time frame difficult.

Each paid aide is inserviced for 3 hours in some elementary strategies and approaches useful when working with students. The inservice deals with ways in which aides can facilitate learning by being knowledgeable about how children learn, and learning styles. The need to personalize the teaching of student coping strategies and the presentation of resources and materials is also discussed.

The inservice training is open to any parents interested in such skills (see Parent Inservicing Program, p. 9). This includes parents who cannot be a paid aide but would like to be more involved with their child's education.

Paid aides are an integral part of the cooperative planning undertaken weekly by teachers. Aides plan with the teacher and resource teacher to enrich the learning already happening.

**Cautions**

A number of cautions were mentioned in establishing a program similar to this. First, the parent aides must be selected carefully. An aptitude with children is as important as an interest in working with children. Naturally, tact must be used; otherwise one can run the risk of eroding the traditional parent volunteer roles.

Second, time to adequately inservice and prepare classroom aides to effectively deliver and evaluate programs is limited. Time is also limited monitoring subsequent follow-up that will ensure professional parameters are not violated, while also ensuring aides have sufficient knowledge and flexibility to effectively do their job with their students.

Third, accountability and record-keeping should be stressed. A number of simple record-keeping devices have been developed for the aides. They are able to quickly record daily achievement scores and anecdotal evidence. This device is essentially a log or journal which is regularly shared with teachers. Student progress is also tracked through the teachers' use of checklists, pre and post testing instruments, School Resource Group (SRG) recommendations, and observations. The SRG is comprised of a psychiatrist, the resource teacher, principal McCorquindale, the students' teacher(s), and the aide. Accountability gives the program: (a) credibility, (b) additional opportunities for funding, (c) opportunities to make changes to better meet the needs of students, (d) generates data, and (e) provides the aides with feedback suggesting their efforts are having a impact.

Finally, teachers should have significant input into the program, both regarding the use of the aides and in purchasing new resources. This input gives the staff a sense of ownership which develops commitment and allows fine tuning of the program.

**Evaluation**

Results to date rely largely upon evaluations made by the teachers. Significant improvements in self-esteem, reading, and, for some, in writing mechanics and expression have been reported by teachers. Additionally, the parent aides have expressed excitement and have derived tremendous satisfaction whenever a student comes to understand a concept ("the light goes on").

## RESOURCES

- Time to adequately inservice, prepare, and monitor classroom aides.
- Funds to pay for a sufficient number of aides.
- Simple record-keeping devices for use by the aides.

# PEER SUPPORT

| | |
|---|---|
| Contact: | Local AADAC Office |
| Location: | Consult your local telephone directory. |

### Description

The Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission offers assistance to teachers and counsellors interested in establishing a Peer Support program. Peer support trains students to offer support to fellow students. The program may be formal, with an office available for students to drop by when in need. Or the program may be informal, in which students interact with their peers and are available to listen and offer support as needed. Other peer support programs include a "Buddy system", which pairs older students with new students to offer the new students help. The objective is to train students to be able to help peers and to plan and implement activities which have a positive impact on the school.

Through consultations, workshops, and resources, teachers and counsellors can learn how to organize and facilitate a Peer Support team. An important component involves consolidating support in the school for the program. Occasionally, some staff are skeptical of the program, wary of the idea of students "counselling" other students. However, it is clear that young people almost always turn first to friends for support. The Peer Support Program uses this fact and trains students to be good listeners, rather than advice givers. When serious issues arise students are trained to make referrals.

### Participants

Students identified by their friends, teachers, or themselves as having natural helping qualities volunteer for the program. As one student explained, "I always liked helping people - it's my nature. I understand myself and I wanted to help other students understand themselves."

### Cautions

Staff should be aware that students in the program cannot simply be the elite students. Including a cross-section of the student population serves to reach to the greatest number of students.

It is important that staff support the program for it could quickly be undermined if not taken seriously.

A strong program needs time to develop. A suggested 3-6 months of planning is recommended to ensure that the program gets off to a good start. Plan to involve at least two facilitators, to ensure responsibility for the program is shared.

## RESOURCES

- Training retreat: a one or two day event where teams begin training and build rapport as a group.
- Weekly team meetings. The program's structure will vary depending on the needs of the school and team.
- Some start-up funding may be available through AADAC.
- Community and staff support for the program.
- *Peer Support Teachers Resource* and *Peer Support Designing Interpersonal Skills* by AADAC.
- *Peer Counselling Starter Kit* from the University of Victoria.
- *Real Friends* by Barbara Varenhorst (1983).

# RE-ENTRY

| | |
|---|---|
| Program Title: | Fresh Start |
| Target Group: | Students who have Dropped Out |
| No. of Students: | 18 |
| Years in Place: | 1 |
| Contact: | Ron Anton |
| Location: | Principal<br>Spruce Grove Composite<br>1000 Calahoo Rd.<br>Spruce Grove, AB<br>T7X 2T7<br>962-0800 |

### Description

This program gives students who have dropped out another chance to achieve their diploma. Every student in the program attends the Fresh Start class first thing every morning. This class tries to teach the students skills necessary to succeed in school. The course offers the students opportunities to improve study habits and conflict management skills, to discuss career planning, to share their experiences with each other, and daily contact with one adult from the school.

A counsellor is assigned to these students, and a structure to monitor the students is in place. Consideration is being given to putting in place a teacher-advisor system and a peer counselling program. In addition, the school may have these students talk to at-risk students in the junior high schools regarding their dropout experience.

### Participants

Re-entry is conditional upon the student adopting a full course load at the start of the term, maintaining a good attendance record, and that a monthly progress report is sent home for parents.

The teacher works with the students every day (a la homeroom) and must be capable of meeting the diverse needs of these students. The counsellor works with the students once a week during class time, monitors attendance behaviour, and maintains contact with the parents.

Parents are involved in the intake meeting(s) and are highly supportive of the school's efforts. They are made aware that progress reports will be arriving monthly. However, there is no organized role for parents in the program. Finally, no community agencies are formally involved.

### Cautions

Again, a skilled teacher with excellent communication skills is essential for the program's success. The program can be very demanding of the teacher. There is a need to isolate the teacher from the Fresh Start students during the school day, otherwise the teacher's free time can quickly disappear with the numerous demands placed by the students.

The school must insist that all re-entry students enroll into the Fresh Start program.

### Evaluation

The program has witnessed improved attendance, attitudes, and achievement. Of the 18 students enrolled in September, 14 (78%) were still attending in April.

At one point, administrators had included students at-risk of dropping out (but have not yet) in the Fresh Start class. The attempt to expand the program did not work as hoped. The program did not seem to meet their needs as well as those students who had dropped. Maturity or the experience of being a dropout may be the difference between the two groups of students.

# ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS

# THE ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOL

| | |
|---|---|
| Target Group: | Students who cannot function in traditional school |
| No. of Students: | 120 |
| Years in Place: | 17 |
| Contact: | James Hoeppner |
| Location: | Principal<br>The Alternative High School<br>5003 20 St. S.W.<br>Calgary, AB<br>T2T 5A5<br>287-9500 |
| Fax: | 287-9485 |

**Description**

Established in 1974 by parents, The Alternative High School is likely the oldest alternative school in the province. In 1975, the Calgary Board of Education assumed control of the school and has allowed it to evolve over the last sixteen years. One hundred and twenty students are currently attending grades ten to twelve.

The school tries to impress upon its students that they are responsible for their own education. This principle manifests itself in a number of ways. Perhaps the most obvious is through the democratic decision-making process.

General meetings are held every Friday and each student and staff member has a vote. The meetings are student run using simplified rules of order to structure the meetings. Student chairs rotate each week, providing many students an opportunity to run a meeting over the course of the year. The chairing arrangement rotates by mentor (teacher-advisor) group with each group responsible to provide a chair and secretary (as decided by the members of the mentor group). Motions are posted on a "motion board" by the previous Tuesday, giving all students an opportunity to see what will be discussed in the upcoming meeting. Amendments are undertaken at the meeting. Just about anything may be debated and decided at the general meeting. Money, discipline, smoking areas, and other school policies are all open to debate. For example, the school sends students to a number of educational conferences each year; which delegates get school funding are decided at the general meetings. Students also decide which speakers will be invited to the weekly speaker's forum. Curriculum, grades, tests, and staffing are the only issues which cannot be decided but which can be debated. Mr. Hoeppner indicated that this democratic process gives the students a sense of ownership and has virtually eliminated problems of discipline and vandalism.

The sense of freedom found in the school is exemplified by students who paint the walls and their lockers. The school supplies the materials for this exercise. This practice has led to debates at the general meeting over the question of censorship and one's individual right to expression. Students come to realize that one person's expression may offend others and generally fall on the side of discretion. Hairstyles and clothing are not regulated either. Although many of these students were often the "independent students" in regular schools who felt it necessary to rebel or be different to express an identity, they come to realize that all students at The Alternative High School are different yet each has equal input into the decision making process.

The Alternative High School occupies a former elementary school. Extra resources include a lower staffing ratio (12:1) since these students need more personal contact. Due to the independent nature of the students, the school has cut back on formal class time to allow for more individualized and one-on-one study.

**Participants**

The school is for students who are bright but who do not do well in the regular school environment ("round peg in a square hole" philosophy). The students tend to be more independent minded, which occasionally creates problems in the more

rigid regular school system.

**Cautions**

Given the nontraditional nature of an alternative school, there may be opposition from the regular system. The school, by its very existence, may be regarded as an indictment of the "regular" system.

As with all programs dealing with at-risk students, staff must be carefully chosen. They must be flexible, capable of working one-on-one, and their teaching philosophy must complement the school's.

**Evaluation**

Students may have up to three opportunities to succeed; most do not need these. 25 students graduated with General or Advanced Diplomas in 1990-91; however, success is more often measured in increased self-esteem and a greater willingness to contribute to society.

## ALTERNATIVE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Fifteen to seventeen junior high students attend this school operated by Lethbridge Public School District. Although any school can refer students on a basis of behaviour (e.g. poor attendance) to the alternate school, no student may graduate from it. The school is not set up to be a permanent home. Students are expected to return to a regular school after a period of time.

The school is not located on a regular school campus. Students have their own facilities. One inconvenience is the lack of recreational facilities. The solution has been to use the city's facilities. This required a van to transport the students to these facilities, among other places.

The school makes every effort to encourage parents to participate but these parents may not be as interested as "regular" students' parents. Nevertheless, the school tries to maintain ongoing contact with the parents. It never demands that parents be involved, rather it tries to encourage the involvement. Occasionally, the school finds it necessary to have the student and the parent(s) sign a "contract" regarding expectations. Parents have expressed satisfaction that someone is finally doing something for their children.

The school, unpersuaded that it must deal with these students alone, has sought out community agencies to help address the problem. Family and Social Services send social workers to the school during the day to teach and run workshops, similar to out-reach programs. Parents Place, a parent support agency, offers parenting skills workshops to parents. The community college has taken a more proactive role by offering direct services available from their programs to students and parents. Other agencies include AADAC and mental health workers.

These agencies are involved in the classroom because they have the expertise and their clients are in the school. One spin-off of such direct participation is that these agencies will ultimately become involved in the regular schools once they see how beneficial their involvement is. The district and teachers tend to lose some control over what is taught but they gain significant expertise in the classroom.

Mr. Stewart warned that staffing is crucial to the success of such an idiosyncratic program. Since each student has different needs the teacher must use a variety of instructional techniques. This requires that administrators give staff freedom to do their work. Such freedom does require adjustment on the part of teachers, many of whom are used to a more structure environment. However, Mr. Stewart noted that the teachers who make the adjustment would never go back to a more struc-

tured environment.

Also, care must be taken when placing students in this program: a new student can radically alter the dynamics of the group. A student might be inappropriate for the group at one time, but be perfect at a later time.

Finally, it is absolutely necessary to have the support of schools in the district for an alternative school. Otherwise, administrators run the risk of the alternative school becoming a dumping ground for troublesome students. In Lethbridge it was made clear that all students sent to the Alternative Junior High School would be sent back to the regular school after a period of time.

Being its first year the program has not had an opportunity to be evaluated.

Contact: Bruce Stewart
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Lethbridge School District
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Lethbridge, AB
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## NORTH COTTAGE HIGH SCHOOL

An alternative setting and educational process is provided for students whose needs have not been met by the "regular" high school. This school works with a maximum of 26 students who have average or above academic abilities and are between the ages of 16 and 18. Students who can reasonably be expected to succeed in a regular program are not normally considered for placement in North Cottage High School. Students who are admitted must have indicated a desire to be back in school and are expected to work for their diploma. A strong attendance policy helps ensure those students who are not serious do not disrupt the others.

Two teachers and an aide use individualized instruction and computer managed learning to teach core academic subjects. Subsequently, not many options are available to the students, though vocational subjects can be taken at the regular high school. Staff must be flexible and committed to the alternative high school and its methods. They must also be confident in a number of subjects at many levels of student competency.

A number of community agencies are involved with North Cottage. The Health Unit provides both instructional and medical resources and the RCMP Community Liaison officer visits the school on a regular basis. Youth workers are also frequently involved as several students have been supported by independent living programs. Finally, weekly speakers from the community are used to address educational, personal, and social issues.

The school has successfully graduated students over the last two years. Other students are completing credits.

Contact: Mr. R. Burrows
Principal
North Cottage High School
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Red Deer, AB
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346-2479
342-2170
Fax: 347-8190

## RESOURCES

**The Alternate High School**
- Lower staff ratio.
- Two small buses for field trips.

**North Cottage High School**
- Lower staff ratio.
- Separate school facility - not attached to the regular senior high school.
- Computers and software for computer managed learning.
- Support from staff in regular high school.

# ALTERNATIVE COMMUNITY EDUCATION

| | |
|---|---|
| Target Group: | Students with severe attitude and behavioural problems- ages 13 - 17 years |
| No. of Students: | 12 |
| Years in Place: | 3 |
| Contact: | G. R. Porter |
| Location: | Assistant Superintendent<br>Foothills School Division<br>Box 400<br>High River, AE<br>T0L 1B0<br>652-3002 |
| Fax: | 652-4204 |

### Description

This is a program for students who can no longer function in a regular school setting. The program focuses on anger management, communication skills, relationship skills, problem solving skills, life skills, social skills, and academics. The objective is to integrate the student back into either the regular school system or the work force.

It is currently housed in a former small engine shop. The office space is used for classroom activities while the shop allows for painting, repairing small engines, etc. Because the site also serves as the school bus compound, students in Alternative Community Education (ACE) spend some time cleaning the buses as well.

The program took at least 2-3 months to put together. The key to the program's success was building up strong relations with community groups and agencies. The school board felt that the students were the community's problem, not simply the school's.

### Participants

Students who are invited to participate can no longer be handled by any other setting currently available in the school system. They have often created problems within the community.

To enter ACE, students must make a presentation to the placement committee in which they demonstrate a willingness and a desire to change their behaviour and attitudes. For the student to be involved the parent(s) must commit 4-6 hours a month in programs involving Len Parken, the teacher at ACE. These evening sessions deal with anger management, communication skills, and strategies to cope with children. Very few parents have not participated.

The placement committee is comprised of Dr. Porter, chair, Mr. Len Parken, secretary, and three directors from Family and Community Support Services (FCSS). In addition to the students' and parents' presentation, the referring agency also presents their arguments for requesting placement in ACE. The referring agency can be anyone, e.g. a school, medical doctor, RCMP officer, probation officer, social worker, etc.

A full-time teacher and a youth counsellor run the program. The youth counsellor has extensive experience working with delinquent children. Together they work with Social Services, who send social workers to the school, probation officers, FCSS, and any other agency which may have involvement with the students. FCSS helps finance ACE and are members of the placement committee.

### Cautions

Dr. Porter notes that the capabilities of the instructor are crucial to the success of the program. The teacher must be flexible and have an understanding of why the students behave the way they do. The teacher must also be capable of using a variety of teaching methods to reach the students. Finally, the teacher's philosophy must be in accord with the school's philosophy.

Regarding the placement process, students and parents must come to realize that this is a very

serious move on the part of the school board. The board fully expects them to change during their stay at ACE, otherwise the students and parents can expect a long life of frustration and incarceration. It is also made clear that students are not allowed to "veg out" while at ACE: they must ultimately go back to the regular program or leave.

Finally, previous experience with these students indicates they cannot cope with the traditional school environment. Consequently, they require a separate facility which can offer them an environment they are less likely to opt out of.

**Evaluation**

The program has had 75% of participants return either to the "normal program" (i.e. regular schools, special education, or vocational education), or into the work force. Successful integration implies the students behave as all students are expected. They are now able to solve their problems before they erupt into major crises, thereby reducing the disruption on their lives and the lives of others around them.

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## ALTERNATIVE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

This school is for students who have weak academic goals at this time in their life. Many of these students cannot function in a regular school and have run afoul of the law. This alternative school keeps them in school until they reach 16. They are then free to legally drop out. Many of the students go on to high school after completing this program but many do not complete the diploma requirements. The objective of the school is to teach them social skills and core academic skills while keeping them in school until they are 16.

The nature of the students involved in the program results in social workers and a probation officer frequently working in the school. As with most alternative schools, staff must be flexible and capable of using a variety of teaching skills.

Parents are only minimally involved as most students have very problematic home lives. Parents are frequently involved when students are experiencing difficulties educationally or socially at school.

This type of alternative school requires a philosophy which is quite clear. This enables staff and students to understand what is expected from them. It is particularly important that the students understand the ground rules under which they will be expected to behave.

The school has been able to keep a high percentage of the students in school until age 16. For these students, the Alternative Junior High was able to provide an environment in which these students could survive their troublesome adolescent years. The school has been able to meet its goals in part because of the flexibility of the staff in dealing with the variety of needs. Also, students are more willing to work with teachers in this alternative environment, despite expectations similar to the regular schools.

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## JUNIOR HIGH ALTERNATIVE PROGRAM

This program offers 15 junior high school students an environment which may give them sufficient time to deal with intense personal problems. Many students in the Alternative Program are 'incorrigible' and can no longer function in a regular school. The intent of the alternative school is to integrate the students back into the regular school once they have dealt with their problems.

Though aimed at junior high school students, the program is administered by Spruce Grove Composite High School. Students spend

half a day on individualized studies in mathematics and language arts, are offered career development, and discuss current events; the remainder of the day is spent on work study. The program is run out of leased space in the city's industrial park.

With the exception of the placement interview, parents are not directly involved with the program. However, parents realize that this program will be the last hope for their children and try support their efforts.

The teacher makes frequent contact with various community agencies as many of the students are their clients. The students' needs also require involvement of a counsellor.

The program's ability to reach the students is ultimately dependent upon the capabilities of the teacher. The demands placed on the teacher require that a teacher aide be available and that the teacher have time away to rejuvenate. Finally, the program requires that one or two staff from the home school compile information on the student to fully inform the program's teacher. This information will free up some of the teacher's time.

The program is succeeding in having students either complete grade 8 and 9 or stay in school until age 16, many of whom would have left earlier. Some students go on to high school. Spruce Grove Composite is considering putting in place a transitional unit for these students.

Contact: Ron Anton
Principal
Spruce Grove Composite High School
1000 Calahoo Rd.
Spruce Grove, AB
T7X 2T7
962-0800

## RESOURCES

**ACE**
- Lower staff ratio.
- Separate facility.
- Parental involvement.
- Youth counsellor experienced with these children.

**Alternative Junior High School**
- Low pupil teacher ratio.
- Teacher assistant who works directly with the students in various ways.
- School facility separate from any regular school environment.

**Junior High Alternative High School**
- Off-campus facility.
- Transportation to and from work study.
- Teacher aide.
- Staff from home school to compile student profile.

# CONTACT LIST

AADAC, Local Office
Consult your local telephone directory.

Alex Munro Elementary
Hélène McCorquindale
Principal
427 78 Ave. N.E.
Calgary, AB
T2K 0R9
275-4300

The Alternative High School
James Hoeppner
Principal
5003 20 St. S.W.
Calgary, AB
T2T 5A5
287-9500
Fax: 287-9485

Bowness High School
Ken Huber
Assistant Principal
4627 77 St. N.W.
Calgary, AB
T3B 2N6
286-5092
Fax: 247-6869

Foothills School Division
G. R. Porter
Assistant Superintendent
Box 400
High River, AB
T0L 1B0
652-3002
Fax: 652-4204

Forest Green Elementary
Patti Penner
Principal
5210 45 St.
Stony Plain, AB
T0E 2G0
963-7366
Fax: 963-2980, via County Office

Forest Lawn High School
Vitus Dubauskas
Assistant-Principal
1304 44 St. S.E.
Calgary, AB
T2A 1M8
272-6665
Fax: 272-1072

Fort McMurray Public School District #2833
Leigh Anne Willard
Supervisor of Student Services
9401 Franklin Ave.
Fort McMurray, AB
T9H 3Z7
743-3705
Fax: 743-2655

Lethbridge School District
Bruce Stewart
Associate Superintendent
433 15 St. S.
Lethbridge, AB
327-4521
Fax: 327-4387

North Cottage High School
Mr. R. Burrows
Principal
5704 - 60 St.
Red Deer, AB
T4N 4R3
346-2479
342-2170
Fax: 347-8190

Red Deer School District #104
D. A. Blacker
Superintendent
4747 53 St.
Red Deer, AB
T4N 2E6
343-1405
Fax: 347-8190

Spruce Grove Composite
Ron Anton
Principal
1000 Calahoo Rd.
Spruce Grove, AB
T7X 2T7
962-0800

St. Clement School
R. Messier
Principal
7620 Millwoods Road S.
Edmonton, AB
T6K 2P7
463-1916

Stony Plain Junior High School
Bob Garneau
Principal
Box 340
Stony Plain, AB
T0E 2G0
963-2203
Fax: 963-2980, via County Office

ValleyView School
Barbara McPherson
Vice-Principal
4105 26 Ave S.E.
Calgary, AB
T2B 0C6
248-3334
Fax: 299-7049, via Area Office

# ALERT: PROGRAM TO INCLUDE IN REVISED PROFILES

Name of Contact Person: _____ Type of Program: _____

Position: _____ Starting Date: _____

School: _____ # of Students Involved: _____

Address: _____ Grades/ages: _____

_____

_____

Phone #: _____

Fax #: _____

Please Cut

Brief Description of Your Program:

Please Return to:

Ann L. Harvey
Policy and Evaluation Branch
Alberta Education
3rd Flr, East, 11160 Jasper Ave.
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 0L2

Telephone: 427-8225
Fax: 422-5255

## COMMENTS REGARDING *DRAFT PROFILES*

1. How will you use this Draft of *Profiles of Dropout Prevention Programs*?
   - ____ names of people to contact for more information on specific programs
   - ____ ideas you can use in current program
   - ____ motivation/ideas for starting your own program
   - ____ publicity for program currently in place
   - ____ other _____

2. Suggestions for revising this *Draft Profiles*:

   a. range of programs included:

   b. details of programs included:

   c. presentation format:

   d. other:

3. Is an expanded version of this *Draft Profiles* warranted?

   Yes ___ No ___

   Comments:

Please Cut Along Line

From: Name _____

School _____

Address _____

_____

Phone # _____

Please Return to: Ann L. Harvey
Policy and Evaluation Branch
Alberta Education
3rd Flr, East, 11160 Jasper Ave.
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 0L2

Telephone: 427-8225
Fax: 422-5255